

DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife asks public to report sick or dead wild birds for West Nile virus monitoring

DOVER – DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife Mosquito Control Section is seeking the public's help in monitoring West Nile virus (WNV) in Delaware by reporting sick or dead wild birds that may have contracted the virus. WNV is a mosquito-transmitted disease of considerable concern to human health and to owners of unvaccinated horses.

DNREC's Mosquito Control Section requests that the public report sick or dead wild birds of the following species only: crows, blue jays, cardinals, robins, hawks, or owls. Clusters of five or more sick or dead wild birds of any species should also be reported. Bird specimens should have been dead for less than 24 hours and not appear to have died from other obvious causes. Wild birds collected by Mosquito Control are processed by the Delaware Department of Agriculture's Poultry & Animal Health Lab, and then submitted to the Division of Public Health (DPH) Laboratory for virus testing. Uncollected dead wild bird specimens are very unlikely to transmit WNV to humans or pets.

To report sick or dead birds, call Mosquito Control's field offices between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday:

- New Castle County and Kent County from Dover north, Glasgow office: 302-836-2555
- Remainder of Kent County and Sussex County, Milford office: 302-422-1512

From July through mid- to late-October, the Mosquito Control Section also operates a statewide network of about 20 sentinel chicken stations in prime mosquito areas, collecting blood samples to be tested by the DPH Lab for WNV and eastern equine encephalitis (EEE), another mosquito-transmitted viral disease that affects humans and horses. The sentinel chicken virus test results help indicate where and when WNV or EEE has been transmitted by mosquitoes from wild bird hosts to other animals, possibly leading to an increased risk of exposure for humans or horses. Neither WNV nor EEE can be transmitted between horses, or from horses to people, or between people.

The period of greatest concern for disease transmission for WNV and EEE is late summer and early fall. WNV is transmitted to humans primarily by the common house mosquito, and possibly by the Asian tiger mosquito. Last year, Delaware had 10 reported WNV-human cases, two of which were fatal. Nationwide, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) logged 2,544 reported WNV-human cases in 2018 that resulted in 137 deaths, 27 of which occurred in our Mid-Atlantic region. In Delaware last year, five WNV-equine cases were reported, in which two unvaccinated horses had to be humanely euthanized.

Residents also are encouraged to call to report intolerable numbers of biting mosquitoes and request control services. Voicemail may be left after hours, or on weekends or holidays.

For more information, call Delaware Mosquito Control's main office at 302-739-9917, or visit the [Mosquito Control web pages](#).

For more information about West Nile virus or eastern equine encephalitis in humans, call the Delaware Division of Public Health at 302-744-4990 or 888-295-5156.

For more information about West Nile virus or eastern equine encephalitis in horses, or horse vaccines, call the Delaware Department of Agriculture's Poultry and Animal Health Section

at 800-282-8685 (Delaware only) or 302-698-4500.

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